

You Can Present, But Can You Present?

By Brigid O'Connor, MBA

In survey after survey people say they fear public speaking more than financial ruin and death. But we're professionals faced with frequent, mandatory public speaking obligations. We can and do get up there and deliver. So for us it isn't a fear of public speaking, but rather a fear of delivering the prosaic presentation, the stale speech, the tedious talk. For us, the stuff of public speaking nightmares surrounds evaluations returned with "insipid," "banal" and "monotonous." To ensure nightmare-free sleep and presentations that engage your audience consider the following.

Content

First, we need to acknowledge statistics offered by Albert Mehrabian in *Silent Messages* (Wadsworth, UK, 1971). Seven percent of our impact as a presenter is based on content. Now that figure isn't a license to write light speeches — high on pizzazz and low on substance. A solid speech is an essential foundation.

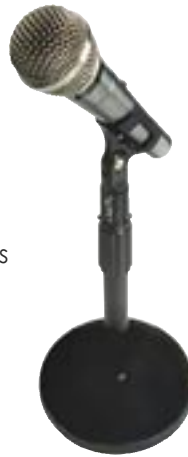
In coaching speakers, I find room for improvement nearly always lies in the speech's content. You absolutely must get a second set of ears to experience your speech before you deliver it. Have your assistant step in and listen to a run through. Just don't have the real audience be the first audience. You need an objective ear to evaluate the effectiveness of your content. After your witness hears it ask them to identify the purpose of the speech. At least half the time I find that the purpose of the speech is murky — the content doesn't elicit the action you want, doesn't evoke the emotions you'd expected, or doesn't make the logical argument you need. Discover this in time and fix it.

Vocal Quality

A full 38 percent of your speech's impact is based on your vocal quality. This can be frustrating because if good vocal quality doesn't come naturally, then it only comes through rigorous practice. How are you in this area? If you don't know then you need to ask someone who can be brutally honest. You need to understand if the audience can detect the correct emotions in your voice. Can they tell that you are passionate/earnest/serious about your subject? Does your voice have endurance? Is it infused with appropriate emotion and paced appropriately from beginning to end? If not, don't despair. You can get your voice to where it needs to be for optimal impact. Identify the weaknesses and systematically go about rectifying them. A tried-and-true way is to video your speech. Watching yourself deliver a speech is frighteningly revealing, and self-critique can take you a long way toward improvement. If you can work with a coach all the better — but start somewhere toward benchmarking and improving vocal quality.

Appearance

How you look when you deliver your speech is paramount — 55 percent of a speech's impact is based on appearance. Appearance can distract



"Catch the Power of PR" Workshop in July

PRSA isn't the only organizations focusing on the topic of public relations. The local chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) will host a half-day interactive workshop that will train guests on the importance of using various public relations tactics as business development tools.

The "Catch the Power of PR" workshop will be held on Wednesday, July 16, 7:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., at the JD Edwards Denver Education Center, located at 7602 Technology Way, in the Denver Tech Center. Tickets for the workshop cost \$50 for NAWBO members and \$60 for guests. Reservations are required by Monday, July 14, and can be made by calling 303-758-0838 or visiting www.nawbodenver.com.

A continental breakfast will kick off the workshop, which will provide hands-on training during three breakout sessions, each with two concurrent programs presented by a local woman business owner — including PRSA Colorado members Jean Galloway of The Galloway Group, Sydney Ayers of Ayers Strategic Public Relations, Holly Johnson of Clarus Public Relations and Carol Anna of Anacomm.

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from your message or pave the way for your credible delivery. In coaching clients I've found that the first place prize in presentation pitfalls goes to eye contact. You must find your next sentence and your next answer in the eyes of your audience — not in the air above your head, on the screen or on your speech printout. There is no more important area to improve than eye contact, but your impact also is affected by having:

- a strong yet natural posture;
- attire that is sharp;
- gestures that are intentional and purposeful.

Take a quick survey of various television programs. You can immediately pick up on the ingredients for an appearance that adds rather than subtracts from your message.


With that in mind set a side some time before your next presentation. Review your content, vocal quality and appearance and guarantee nightmare free sleep and speaker evaluations that cite your presentation as "phenomenal," "credible," "compelling" and "convincing."

Delegation (cont'd from page 3)

ride to get a close up look at a major oil spill. The delegation was very curious about the role American PR firms play in counseling clients, strategic planning, crisis communications and media relations. They were hungry for professional development resources and opportunities to network with their peers around the world.

In the end, we learned just as much from them as they did from us. It was an unforgettable experience. We have a standing invitation to visit Azerbaijan, and a great group photo to remind us that every time a reporter makes us mad we should be grateful for our free press and the thin line that separates PR from propaganda.

The meeting was organized by the State Department's International Visitor Program. From Denver, the delegation traveled to Ohio and New York before returning home.




You don't do public relations just to see your name in print. You do it so others will. You do it so that your customers, prospects and investors know your brand and trust your reputation when they have an opportunity to do business with you.

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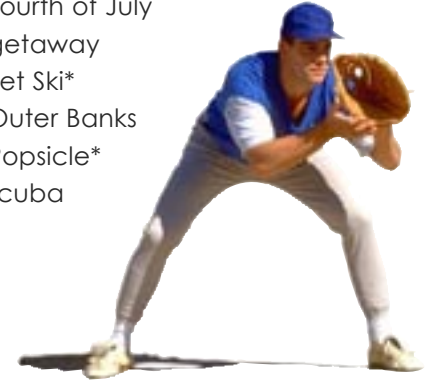
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AP STYLE

Celebrate Summer

It's hard to believe, but it's already July. Summer wouldn't be official without a reminder of words related to the season in AP Style.

- ballpark
- ballplayer
- barbecue
- Fourth of July
- getaway
- Jet Ski*
- Outer Banks
- Popsicle*
- scuba



*a registered trademark

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